

Visual AccountMate Backup and Recovery Procedures

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Introduction

Face one fact: VAM is an excellent program, but network crashes occur and can result in loss of data. It's inevitable that you'll have a major crash sometime in your career. VAM may automatically recover from most of them but not all. It is important for you to make frequent backup copies of your data files, because the PC network computing environment is inherently unstable. The purpose of backup is to enable you to recover from a computer disaster or human error. If you don't, it's both time-consuming and expensive to restore data if your working computer files get damaged. If you follow these procedures, we guarantee you'll have an easier time when you have to restore damaged files.

VAM files

The VAM data files are stored in a folder named \DATA on your network drive. Within that folder there are folders for each company in the system, including one for the sample company. These data files have different file names and file extensions and you'll see these: .CDX, .DBF, .DBT, .DBC, DBT, .DCX. All these files are important to VAM's function. The files in your company data folders are all you have to backup. The system files are stored on the CD that came with your system and if we've made program modifications, we keep a backup of those for you. Moreover, when a crash occurs, the system files are seldom affected; it's usually the company data files that get trashed. If your system gets corrupted, you can simply reinstall it from the original CD.

Hard disk backup

You have several alternatives for backing up your hard drive. It's never necessary to back up the entire hard disk; only the working data files need to be backed up. The remaining files are ones that never change, such as the computer's operating system and your application programs which have to be restored from the original CDs anyway.

What to use

You can use many different media, including CD-R, CD-W, Zip or Jazz and tape and we have no preference. Use the one that lets you do the entire operation on a single disk or tape. We use tape and floppies. We also make safety backups on other hard drives in the system. If you compress the data, you can squeeze accounting data into 10% of its original space, so a 100MB Zip disk can hold about 1GB of data.

Software

Windows contains an excellent backup program, Backup.exe. In addition you can get PKZIP as shareware or purchase a full copy on the Web. Your tape drive and Zip/Jazz drives come with very good backup programs. Follow their instructions for best results.

Put a date on it

Be sure to write the date on your backup disks and tapes. This simple precaution makes it easier to figure out which backup to use for recovery.

Where to keep backups

Backup data files are more valuable than the computer on which they reside. They should be stored in a fireproof container away from the computer and the working files. They should NOT be stored in the same room as the computer. In some offices, the backups are kept in a staff member's home. In others, there are reciprocal storage arrangements between companies. Bank vaults are sometimes used, but they are not necessary unless theft of data is a risk. In fact, bank vaults are a bad place for backups because most computer crashes seem to occur at night after banking hours.

Recommended backup retention schedule

This is the most important part. It means you keep a more backups than normal, but it's worth it for the peace of mind.

When to back up	How long to keep backups
Daily - at end of day	One week
Weekly - Friday afternoon	One month
Monthly - before closing out the month	One year
Annually - before closing the year	Three years (at least)
Before a major automatic process, like service charges	Until procedure completes OK